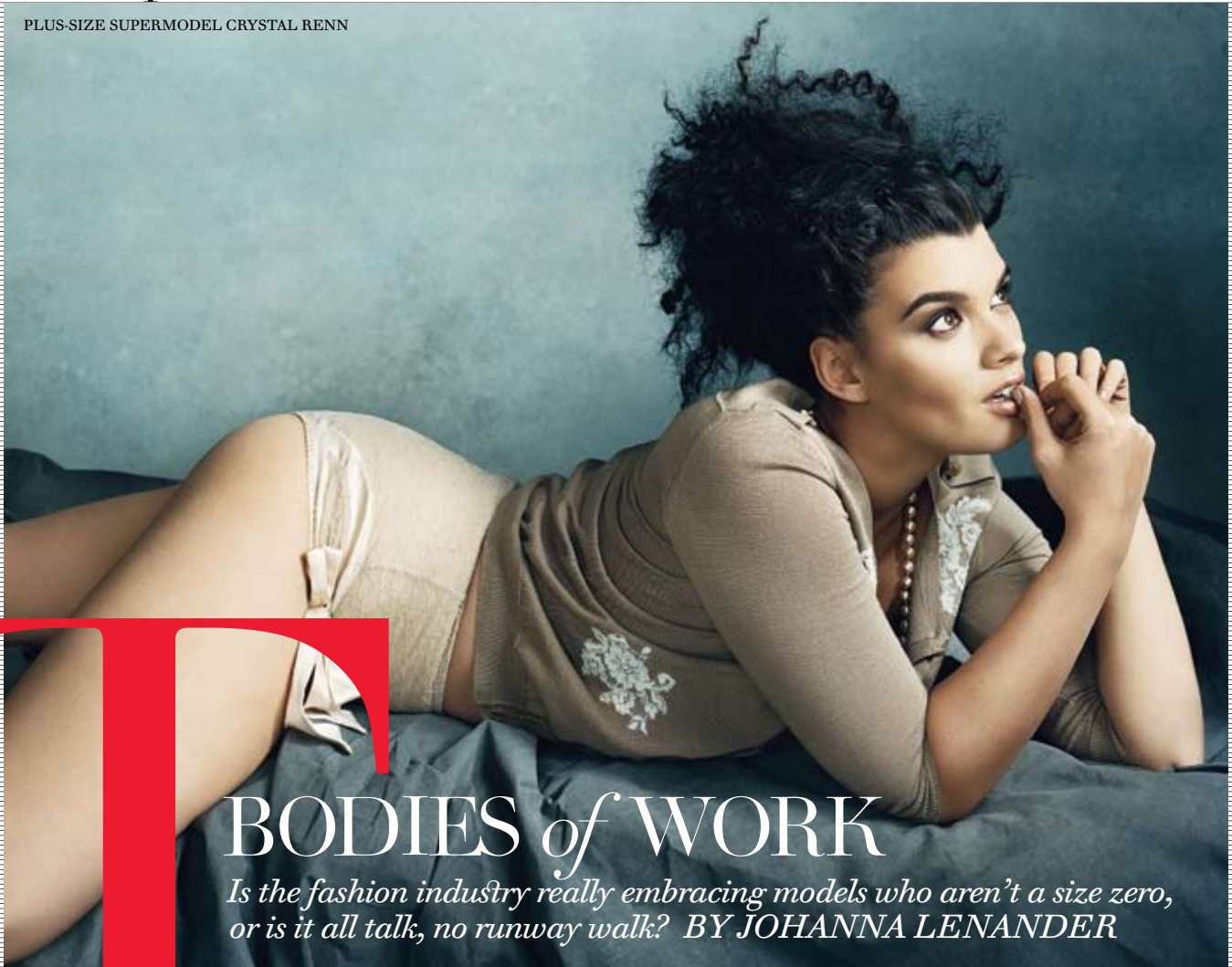


PLUS-SIZE SUPERMODEL CRYSTAL RENN



## BODIES of WORK

*Is the fashion industry really embracing models who aren't a size zero, or is it all talk, no runway walk? BY JOHANNA LENANDER*

The first half of 2010 will go down in fashion history as a season of political correctness. The notoriously fantasy-driven and non-inclusive industry experienced an insurgence of reality and diversity. The French and American editions of *Marie Claire* put out special no-retouching issues, 40+ babe Kristen McMenamy returned to Calvin Klein's catwalk along with Stella Tennant and Kirsty Hume (both over 30), and there was an influx of up-and-coming black and brown beauties. But the biggest—pun intended—part of this revolution was the sudden expansion in model sizes. American plus-size supermodel Crystal Renn blazed through French *Vogue*, *Elle*, *V* and *Glamour*, while rotund rocker Beth Ditto graced the premier cover of style bible *Love* magazine. Meanwhile, the busty young Brigitte Bardot look-alike Lara Stone emerged as the model of the moment. When über-stylist Katie Grand helped cast Victoria's Secret models such

as Doutzen Kroes, Alessandra Ambrosio, Miranda Kerr, Rosie Huntington-Whiteley and Bianca Balti for the Prada and Louis Vuitton Fall 2010 shows, she shocked front-row regulars who hadn't seen hips on a catwalk since the turn of the millennium. At the same time, the once-ubiquitous wave of frail, childlike, almost transparently thin Eastern European models seemed to have washed up on the has-been shores. It was as if the industry wanted to apologize for the past five years. "The prepubescent Russian girls aren't so popular anymore," says Christopher Michael, a model agent at One Management in New York. "Now everyone is interested in gorgeous, healthy girls with personality. The beauty ideal is turning more toward what's considered beautiful by the general public."

Is this change we can believe in? In the new decade, the fashion industry appears to be inching toward a healthier image than it promoted in the last one.

Power photographers like Steven Meisel and the duo Inez van Lamsweerde and Vinoodh Matadin, who launched the careers of several pubescent starvelings, now reportedly refuse to shoot anyone under 16 and 18, respectively. British *Vogue* editor Alexandra Shulman has criticized designers who send size zero samples that fit only wispy waifs, and has stated that the magazine adds bulk to ultra-skinny models in retouch. Anna Wintour has declared that American *Vogue* will henceforth include a wider variety of body types.

Will all this have a lasting impact? Maybe. And maybe not. Right now, the industry appears to be in the middle of a shift, but it's hard to see trends clearly while they're still emerging. And, of course, add to that the famed fickleness of the fashion pendulum—what you see now could just be a fleeting fad.

Fashion trends usually have some correlation to the world of finance. »

It seems that the previous flavour of model created a bad aftertaste with consumers at a time when magazines and labels couldn't afford to lose them. "The super-skinny thing started to create a bad cultural spinoff," says Michael. "Women are tired of trying to fit into clothes that have been made for 14-year-olds. The economy has forced the fashion industry to listen to what consumers want."

That's why Justin Gelband has been very busy lately. He's a New York celebrity trainer known for his ability to transform tomboyish models like Miranda Kerr into luscious Victoria's Secret Angels. "For the past year, agencies have been sending me more and more high-fashion girls to help them gain more curves," he says. (He works with Irina Shayk, Anne Vyalitsyna, Behati Prinsloo and Suvi Koponen, to

name a few.) Still, Gelband's regime doesn't exactly make a girl zaftig. It's more about being lean without being frail, and he works on his clients' nutrition as much as their exercise routine. "The agents see that it's possible for the girls to be strong and muscular and still fit in the designer samples," he says. "They also notice that when the girls are healthy, they look beautiful and have more stamina. They work better."

There's something obscene in that realization—it implies that an unhealthy lifestyle has been not just acceptable among models, but encouraged. In 2006, I wrote press releases for several high-fashion houses, and often overheard discussions about runway castings and who should wear what. There was one model in particular who created sartorial issues. She was a major star but her struggle with anorexia had

# "WOMEN ARE TIRED OF TRYING TO FIT INTO CLOTHES THAT HAVE BEEN MADE FOR 14-YEAR-OLD GIRLS."

left her so skeletal that some designers felt that her legs couldn't be exposed. Others did not see this as a problem, however, and sent her out in micro minis. It was especially ironic to see her rattling about in clingy, revealing dresses by a designer who claimed the collection was inspired by "womanly curves, hips, breasts and buttocks." »

## THE IT GIRLS



**1950S**

**LISA**

**FONSSAGRIVES**

*The original supermodel (take that, Janice Dickinson!) was a swan-like former ballerina who was on more than 200 Vogue covers. Early- to mid-20th-century fashion was geared to wealthy, grown-up women, and the ladylike Fonssagrives stayed on top for three decades.*



**1960S**

**VERUSCHKA**

*As the youthquake started to shake up the early '60s, fashion turned to a sexier and younger look. Veruschka embodied the strong and feline ideal of the moment with her lean and muscular figure.*



**1960S**

**TWIGGY**

*Twiggy appeared almost asexual with her childlike body and saucer-sized eyes. Her exaggerated makeup reinforced the impression of a little girl playing dress-up.*



**1970S**

**PAT CLEVELAND**

*Time for va-va-voom again. Cleveland's sultry beauty and flamboyant persona meshed perfectly with fashion's resurrection of 1930s glamour.*



**1970S**

**LAUREN HUTTON**

*The sporty tomboy captured a casual mood that celebrated androgynous bodies and quirky features like the gap between Hutton's teeth.*

I wasn't the only one who had a reaction. In 2007, the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA) introduced its Health Initiative, which raised awareness of the rampant eating disorders among young models, and included guidelines on how to address the issue. (Previously, other fashion week cities like Milan, London and Madrid had attempted to install catwalk bans on underweight girls, but were thoroughly ignored by designers.) At a panel discussion, Coco Rocha—who at size four is considered too large for many runways—spoke about the demands she faces from agents and clients. “They said, ‘You need to lose more weight—the look this year is anorexia, and although we don’t want you to be anorexic, we want you to look it,’” she said. “My question is, How do you look anorexic unless you actually are?”

Some models, like Rocha, are able to stand up for themselves and their natural body type. Others, like the Dutch model Kim Noorda, succumb to the pressure. Noorda wrote candidly in American *Vogue*'s April issue about her struggles with weight and body image. It's hard for an average-sized woman to understand how a lanky and long-limbed girl can feel overweight. But your eyes adjust to what you see around you.

“When you work as a model, your perception of a woman's body becomes completely skewed,” says Caroline Forsling, a Swedish model who has been working steadily for over 15 years for clients like *Sports Illustrated* and Michael Kors. “You can't see that a normal-sized figure is attractive. You completely lose touch with reality.”

Designer, former model and British royalty India Hicks agrees that the

“THE REALITY IS YOU HAVE TO WORK A LOT HARDER TO MAKE CLOTHES LOOK GOOD ON A VOLUPTUOUS GIRL.”

fashion industry's perception of body type is completely surreal. “When they talk about people like Lara Stone being a plus-size model—not even a plus-size model but a voluptuous model—it's just mental!” she exclaims.

At five-foot-11 and 124 pounds, Forsling is still sometimes turned down for jobs because she is too big. “I have

lost runway jobs because I had breasts,” she says. “And an agent once told me to lose weight by dropping the not-so-subtle hint that she wanted to see more of my collarbones.” Forsling's life is unusually grounded for a model; she's a happily married mother of two who spends more time at the playground than in the gym. While she still loves the business, she says it hurts to be rejected because of her size. “It makes me so angry when I think about all the young, insecure girls that don't have a support system,” she says. “Models are so lonely. You're always on your own in a hotel room with way too much time to obsess on this stuff.”

“Modelling can be very demeaning for a young girl,” agrees Hicks. “And, you know, the saddest part is that you've got these incredibly beautiful, beautiful creatures out there and they have no self-esteem whatsoever.” »



**1970S**  
**JERRY HALL**  
*The return of glamour! Hall sported the shiniest hair, the longest legs and the reddest lips—and Bryan Ferry and Mick Jagger as accessories, of course.*



**1980S**  
**GIA CARANGI**  
*Disco fever turned into a darker mood. Carangi's wild-child persona and wounded stare brought in a new raw street sensibility. Her womanly body and tomboy attitude made for an interesting contrast.*



**1980S**  
**CHRISTIE BRINKLEY**  
*Fashion got safe with the sunny California girl, whose athletic curves helped launch a workout craze.*



**1980S**  
**PAULINA PORIZKOVA**  
*The mood shifted from girl next door to goddess. Porizkova was flawless, feminine and utterly unattainable, with a long and lean hourglass figure.*



**1990S**  
**NAOMI, LINDA, CINDY, CHRISTY, CLAUDIA**  
*The supers arrived. Everything about them was larger-than-life, especially their paycheques.*



**1990S**  
**KATE MOSS**  
*The economy tanked and glamour turned to grunge. Itty-bitty Moss set a new beauty standard. “Waif” became a compliment.*

PHOTOGRAPHY: HALL BY LICHFIELD/GETTY; CARANGI BY ANDREA BLANCHI/GETTY; BRINKLEY BY EVERETT COLLECTION/REX USA

PHOTOGRAPHY: PORIZKOVA BY NEAL PRESTON/CORBIS; CAMPBELL BY NEVILLE MARLINE/REX USA; MOSS BY TERRY O'NEILL/HULFON ARCHIVE/GETTY

“THERE ARE CERTAIN PROPORTIONS THAT LOOK GOOD. IF YOU DON’T HAVE THOSE PROPORTIONS, YOU WILL BE TOLD THAT YOU NEED TO LOSE WEIGHT.”

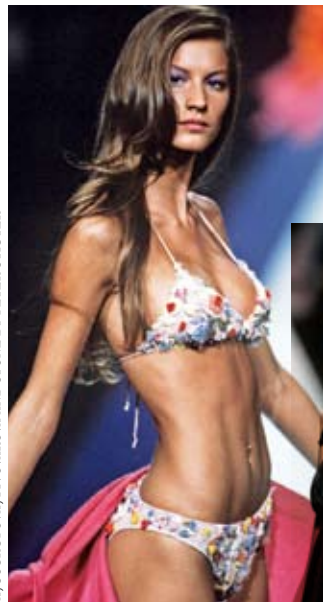


But agents aren’t telling models to lose weight just because they’re evil. “Our job is to get them jobs—it is the sample sizes produced by the designers that demand such a small fit. It’s not about our taste. We supply a product,” says Michael.

But aren’t agencies supposed to look after their models’ well-being? “Yes, but we’re not always aware when a girl has a problem. It’s very hard to tell sometimes.” And of course it is. People with eating disorders are skilled at hiding their illness.

Ultimately, the girls need to fit into the clothes, right? Agents, stylists and models all point to designer sample sizes as the root of the problem. In the past 10 years or so, samples—used for photo shoots and runway walks—have shrunk from size four to zero. In Kim Noorda’s journal, the five-foot-10 model writes that when she weighed 110 pounds, she fit into the samples easily. When she got treatment for her eating disorder and gained 15 pounds, however, doing runway shows became extremely uncomfortable.

If designers made bigger samples, the models wouldn’t have to be so thin, »



**1990S**

**GISELE BÜNDCHEN**

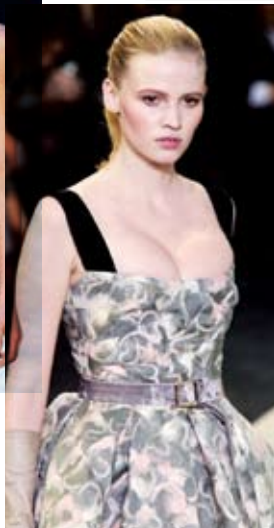
*After od’ing on nightclubbing urchins, fashion was ready for sunshine. Enter the strong, sexy Brazilian beach babe and her army of curvy compatriots.*



**2000S**

**HANA SOUKUPOVÁ, SASHA PIVOVAROVA**

*A slew of ethereal and slightly alien Slavs took over the runways. Breasts shrank from C-cup to A-cup to no cup, and models got thinner than ever.*



**2010**

**LARA STONE**

*Boobs and booty are back! The voluptuous (in relative terms) Miss Stone sets off a whole new curve craze, and models start hitting the gym and the carbs again.*

PHOTOGRAPHY: BÜNDCHEN BY STEVE WOOD/REX USA; SOUKUPOVÁ, PIVOVAROVA AND STONE BY PETER STIGTER

“WHEN A GIRL IS TOO SLIM, I DON’T CAST HER, EVEN IF I LIKE HER FACE. I CAN SEE WHEN IT’S NOT NATURAL.”



so the argument goes. So why do designers make such tiny clothes?

“There are certain proportions that make clothes look good on a body. You can be a beautiful woman but if you don’t have those proportions, you will be told that you need to lose weight. There are very few Naomi Campbells out there,” says recent CFDA award winner Sophie Théallet. She says the industry standard sample sizes are not a reflection of her personal taste. “I

love a curvy woman who is a woman, but the reality is that you have to work a lot harder to make clothes look good on a voluptuous girl. If my company was bigger, I could afford to have more diverse sample sizes.”

Still, the girls Théallet casts are relatively voluptuous, and her samples—size four—are generous by fashion standards. Coco Rocha opened her Fall 2010 show. “When a girl is too slim, I don’t cast her, even if I like her face. I can see when it’s not natural,” says Théallet. “I can’t take it—I just want to feed her.”

One designer who has gone out on a limb and cast real, live size 10 women is knitwear designer Mark Fast. For his Spring 2010 show, Fast created a sensation when he showed his intricately detailed and revealing knits on both skinny and full-figured models. “I was aware that many of my customers are women that have curves,” he says. “I wanted to express a fantasy world for

them on the catwalk—we all need to dream!” However, he admits that it’s easier to dress curvy women in knitwear than clothes made of other fabrics. “My knitwear has the capability to stretch quite a bit, so there is room to fill in.”

Other designers seemed to be on a similar track for Fall 2010. Prada showed demure, retro dresses that would flatter women of all sizes. Phoebe Philo at Celine kept things fluid and covered up. Even Nicolas Ghesquière at Balenciaga dropped his infamously skinny pants in favour of softer, rounder silhouettes. Will all this change the beauty ideals pushed by ads and magazines? Probably. Will it help regular women feel less inadequate? Probably not. But at least a few more models will face less pressure to look emaciated. And maybe that will spare a fashion-obsessed teenager or two from trying to lose those last five pounds. Let’s enjoy it while it lasts. □